

## **First workshop of NRLs for monitoring bacteriological and viral contamination of bivalve molluscs, 14-16<sup>th</sup> May 2002, Weymouth, UK**

A workshop of the European National Reference Laboratories for monitoring bacteriological and viral contamination of bivalve molluscs was held at CEFAS (The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science) on May 14-16 2002. The workshop was hosted by DG Sanco of the European Commission, Brussels, and the attendees comprised representatives from CEFAS Weymouth (the European Community Reference Laboratory), the European National Reference Laboratories and the European Commission Food and Veterinary Office. The workshop produced a number of resolutions to be distributed in the public domain mainly through the CRL website ([www.crlcefass.org](http://www.crlcefass.org)).

### **RESOLUTIONS**

1. There was recognition by the NRLs of the progress in establishing the CRL/NRL network but there was need to develop and implement work programmes to ensure compliance with requirements of Council Decision 1999/313/EEC as soon as possible.
2. The NRLs agreed to build on the scientific and technical liaison between members of the reference laboratory network initiated at the workshop.
3. It was agreed that the method for shellfish examination as recommended by the CRL (Donovan, *et al*, 1998\*) should be the reference method for *E.coli* in live bivalve molluscs. However it was identified that formal validation of this method would need to be carried out.
4. The NRLs agreed that the CRL *E.coli* method should be proposed to ISO/CEN, by the CRL, as a method to cover the requirements of a 5x3 MPN test satisfactory for live bivalve molluscs.
5. The NRLs agreed that rapid methods for the detection of *E. coli* in shellfish should be discussed at the next meeting (May 2003).
6. The NRLs agreed with the proposal in the draft microbiological criteria proposals that the faecal coliform standard be deleted and *E.coli* be used as the sole faecal indicator bacterium for live bivalve molluscs.
7. The NRLs supported the use of the CRL Collaborative Shellfish EQA Scheme as the primary means of comparative bacteriological testing between NRLs and also between National Laboratories within each member state.
8. Further to Resolution 7 the NRLs recommended a pilot EQA distribution to the reference laboratory network and it was agreed that this would be organised by the EQA scheme collaborators within six months of this meeting (by November 2002).

9. The NRLs agreed that specific ring trials would be undertaken in addition to EQA participation but that any such trials should be deferred until the EQA has been implemented for NRLs.
10. The NRLs endorsed the need for compliance with Article 4(g) in Council Decision 1999/313/EEC in that the reference laboratories should have an appropriate system of quality assurance.
11. The NRLs agreed that a working group should be established to produce a guidance document for the microbiological monitoring of shellfish harvesting areas.
12. Further to the preparation of the guidance document the NRLs recommended that certain criteria relating to the microbiological monitoring of shellfish harvesting areas inter alia, sample size, sample frequency, conditions of transport, should be specified in the relevant Community legislation.
13. Those laboratories which do not currently have the ability to carry out analysis of shellfish for FRNA bacteriophage undertook to seek training and advice from the CRL and/or other competent NRLs within a period of one year of this meeting (May 2003).
14. It was agreed that there would be a target for NRLs who do not currently have the ability to carry out analysis of shellfish for FRNA bacteriophage to achieve competence within a period of one year of this meeting (May 2003).
15. It was agreed that a pilot ring trial for FRNA bacteriophage would be organised by the CRL, within eight months of this meeting, for those NRLs able to undertake this analysis (by January 2003).
16. Those laboratories which do not currently have the ability to carry out analysis of shellfish for viruses undertook to seek training and advice from the CRL and/or other competent NRLs within a period of one year of this meeting (May 2003).
17. It was agreed that there would be a target for NRLs who do not currently have the ability to carry out analysis of shellfish for viruses to achieve competence within a period of two years of this meeting (May 2004).
18. It was agreed that a pilot ring trial for Hepatitis A virus would be organised by the CRL, within six months of this meeting, for those NRLs able to undertake this analysis (by November 2002).
19. It was agreed that a pilot ring trial for Norwalk-like virus would be organised by the CRL, within one year of this meeting, for those NRLs able to undertake this analysis (by May 2003).
20. There was general agreement by NRLs that the process performance criterion for deputation using FRNA bacteriophage as given in the draft microbiological criteria document dated 26 March 2002 was acceptable.

21. It was agreed that future workshops of the laboratory network should be held on an annual basis and that the next meeting would be on May 6-8 2003.

\*Donovan T D, Gallacher S, Andrews N J, Greenwood M H, Graham J, Russell, J E, Roberts D and Lee R (1998) Modification of the standard UK method for the enumeration of *Escherichia coli* in live bivalve molluscs. *Communicable Disease and Public Health* **1**, 188-196.

#### Glossary

1. CRL - Community Reference Laboratory
2. CEN - Comité Européen Normalisation (European Committee for Standardization)
3. EQA - External Quality Assessment
4. FRNA bacteriophage - male-specific ribonucleic acid bacteriophage
5. ISO - International Organisation for Standardisation
6. MPN - Most Probable Number
7. NRL - National Reference Laboratory